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Ronald, James and Davis, Seth Jon orcid.org/0000-0001-5928-9046 (Accepted: 2021)
Arabidopsis ELF3 sub-nuclear localization responds to changes in ambient temperature.
Plant Physiology. ISSN 0032-0889 (In Press)

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Arabidopsis ELF3 sub-nuclear localization responds to changes in ambient temperature.

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JR, AJW, and SJD conceived the original research plans; AJW and SJD supervised the experiments; JR performed the experiments; JR wrote the article with contributions of all the authors; SJD agrees to serve as the author responsible for contact and ensures communication.

Acknowledgements

Reduction in ELF3 localization to foci in response to warming temperature

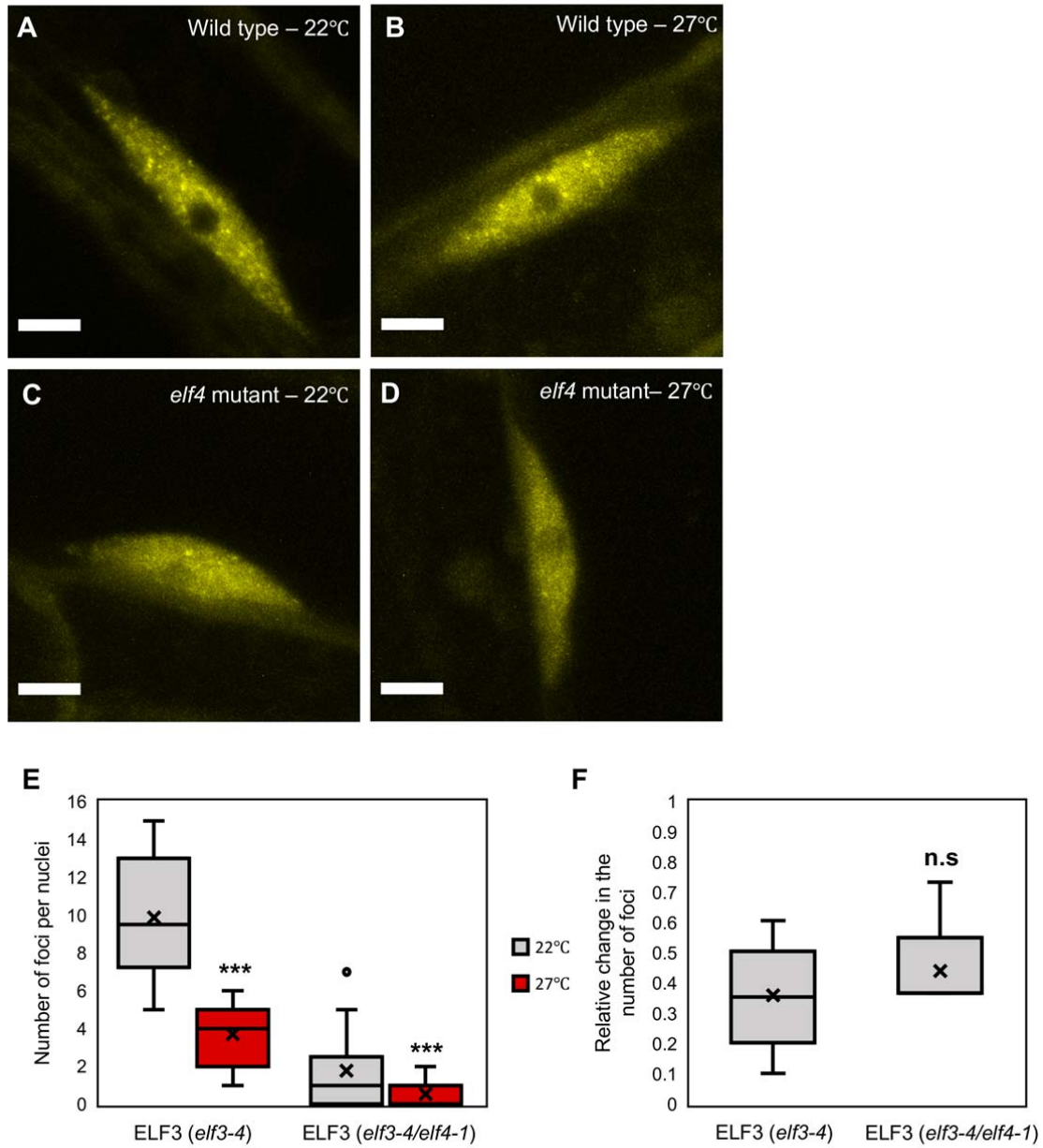
We thank York Biology Imaging and Cytometry for their assistance and technical advice in this work.

J.R is funded by a BBSRC studentship award (ref 1792522). Work on this project was also supported by a BBSRC awards BB/N018540/1 and BB/V006665/1, and the 111 Project grant D16014.

1 **Dear Editor,**

2 Plants adapt their development to daily and seasonal ambient temperature
3 fluctuations. Warming triggers a suite of molecular responses that leads to pronounced
4 changes in plant development and architecture (Quint et al., 2016). Collectively, this response
5 is called thermomorphogenesis. The evening complex (EC) is a transcriptional regulatory
6 complex composed of EARLY FLOWERING3 (ELF3), ELF4, and LUX ARRHYTHMO
7 (LUX) that has emerged as a hub in the circadian clock and plant development (Nusinow et
8 al., 2011, Herrero et al., 2012, Ezer et al., 2017). The ability of the EC to bind to DNA is
9 temperature-dependent, with warm temperature reducing the association of the EC to DNA
10 (Raschke et al., 2015, Press et al., 2016, Ezer et al., 2017, Silva et al., 2020). However, it is
11 unclear how warm temperature inhibits the DNA binding ability of the EC. Previously, we
12 observed that ELF3 localizes to sub-nuclear structures called foci (Herrero et al., 2012).
13 Impaired localization of ELF3 to foci correlated with elevated expression of EC targets
14 (Anwer et al., 2014), suggesting that foci could be sites where the EC binds to DNA and
15 represses gene expression. Therefore, we hypothesized that warm temperatures inhibits EC
16 function by reducing the localization of ELF3 to foci.

17 To test this, first we investigated whether warm temperature influenced the sub-
18 nuclear localization of ELF3 in Arabidopsis. Using the previously described *35S::YFP:ELF3*
19 (*elf3-4*) line (Herrero et al., 2012), we observed that a two-hour 27°C temperature pulse
20 resulted in fewer and smaller foci in hypocotyl nuclei (**Figure 1A, 1C, 1E**). ELF4 was found
21 to be required for ELF3 to these localize to foci (Kolmos et al., 2011, Herrero et al., 2012,
22 Anwer et al., 2014) and was also proposed to have a warm temperature specific function in
23 the EC (Silva et al., 2020, Jung et al., 2020). Therefore, we investigated whether ELF4
24 regulated the sensitivity of ELF3 foci to warm temperature. We introgressed the
25 *35S::YFP:ELF3* line into the *elf3-4/elf4-1* mutant. This line will be referred to as ELF4 (4-),

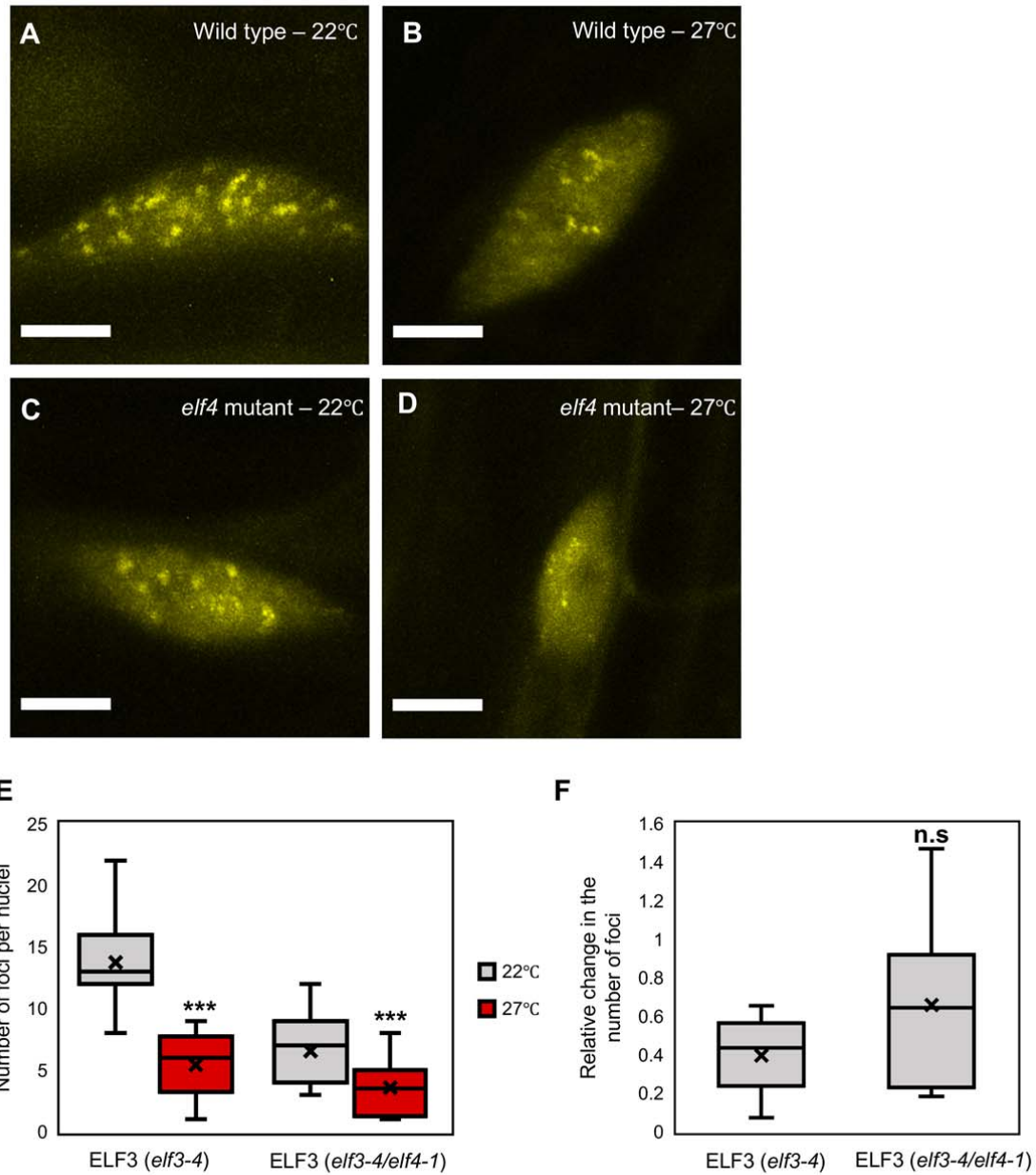


26 while the original line will be called ELF3 (4+). The localization of ELF3 (4-) to foci was
 27 impeded at 22°C (**Figure 1B**) and this was further reduced by a 27°C pulse (**Figure 1D-E**).
 28 However, the relative change in the number of foci for ELF3 (4-) in response to the 27°C
 29 pulse was similar to ELF3 (4+) (**Figure 1F**). Together, warm temperatures suppress the
 30 localization of ELF3 to foci and ELF4 has a limited role within this.

31 To understand if the response of ELF3 foci to temperature was tissue-dependent, we
 32 investigated the effect of a 27°C pulse on foci formation in root nuclei. As in hypocotyl
 33 nuclei, a 27°C pulse suppressed the localization of ELF3 (4+) to foci in root nuclei and these
 34 foci were smaller and less bright than at 22°C (**Figure 2A-B**). There was no significant
 35 change in the magnitude of effect caused by the 27°C pulse between the tissue types, with
 36 ELF3 (4+) foci reduced by 62% and 60% in hypocotyl and root nuclei, respectively.
 37 Therefore, ELF3 foci do not have a tissue-dependent response to warm temperature.

38 As ELF4 protein moves from shoot to root tissue, and this movement is temperature
 39 sensitive (Chen et al., 2020), we examined the requirement of ELF4 in regulating the thermal
 40 responsiveness of ELF3 foci in root nuclei. As with ELF3 (4+), ELF3 (4-) localized to foci in
 41 root nuclei and these foci were larger and brighter than those in hypocotyl nuclei (**Figure 1C**,
 42 **2C**). The phenotypic effect of the *elf4-1* mutation on ELF3 foci abundance was weaker in
 43 root nuclei, with foci only reduced by 52% compared to an 81% reduction in hypocotyl
 44 nuclei at 22°C. ELF3 (4-) foci in root nuclei were also reduced by a 27°C temperature pulse
 45 (**Figure 2D-E**). However, this effect was more variable and on average weaker than the
 46 response of ELF3 (4+) foci to the 27°C pulse (**Figure 2F**). As with ELF3 (4+), ELF3 (4-) foci
 47 appeared smaller and less bright after a 27°C pulse in root nuclei (**Figure 2C-D**). Combined,
 48 ELF4 does not have a critical role in buffering ELF3 foci against warming temperatures in
 49 either hypocotyl or root nuclei.

50 The decrease in foci number following a 27°C pulse could reflect changes in the
 51 nuclear accumulation of ELF3. To investigate this, we measured ELF3 (4+) and ELF3 (4-)
 52 nuclear signal at 22°C and 27°C in hypocotyl and root nuclei. As we have reported previously
 53 (Herrero et al., 2012), ELF4 is required for proper nuclear accumulation of ELF3
 54 (**Supplementary Figure 1**). Regardless of the temperature, ELF3 (4-) had a lower nuclear
 55 accumulation than ELF3 (4+) in hypocotyl and root nuclei. The 27°C pulse also strongly



56 reduced the nuclear accumulation of ELF3 (4+) in hypocotyl nuclei (**Supplementary Figure**
 57 **1A**). Furthermore, there was an additive effect of the 27°C pulse and the *elf4-1* mutation on
 58 the nuclear accumulation of ELF3 in hypocotyl nuclei. A similar response to the 27°C pulse
 59 was seen in root nuclei for both ELF3 (4+) and ELF3 (4-) (**Supplementary Figure 1B**). As
 60 with hypocotyl nuclei, the 27°C pulse and the *elf4-1* mutation had an additive effect on ELF3
 61 nuclear accumulation (**Supplementary Figure 1B**). The reduced nuclear accumulation of

62 ELF3 at 27°C is consistent with a recent report that ELF3 is degraded by BBX18 and
63 XBAT31 at warm temperatures (Zhang, et al. 2021).

64 In summary, the localization of ELF3 to foci is suppressed by warm temperature and
65 ELF4 does not seem to regulate this process. Thus, ELF4 must stabilize the function of the
66 EC at warm temperatures through a separate mechanism (Silva et al., 2020). As the
67 localization of ELF3 to foci was associated with increased transcriptional activity of ELF3, a
68 reduction in foci may contribute to the weaker EC function at warm temperatures (Kolmos et
69 al., 2011, Ezer et al., 2017). We also highlight a recent report that observed ELF3 localizing
70 to sub-nuclear structures called speckles in response to warming (Jung et al., 2020). Direct
71 comparisons are complicated because of the different genetic resources and experimental
72 conditions used, but in the supplementary text we discuss why our results may diverge from
73 the work of Jung *et al.*, (2020).

74

75 **Figure 1 – Elevated temperature reduces the association of ELF3 to foci in hypocotyl nuclei.** The
 76 localization of ELF3 at dusk in hypocotyl nuclei of (A-B) *35S::YFP:ELF3 elf3-4* or (C-D)
 77 *35S::YFP:ELF3 elf3-4/elf4-1* plants. Images were taken at (A, C) 22°C or (B, D) after a two-hour
 78 27°C pulse started at ZT6 (short-day 8/16 photoperiods). (E) Number of foci per nucleus under the
 79 respective treatment. (F) Relative change in the number of ELF3 foci following a temperature pulse in
 80 the *elf3-4* or *elf3-4/elf4-1* mutant. Data was made relative to the respective genotype at 22°C. For *elf3-*
 81 *4/elf4-1*, nuclei with no focus were removed this from calculation. Images were collected on two
 82 occasions. Significance was determined by a T-test: n.s = no significance, *** = $p < 0.001$. Scale bars
 83 are 5 μ m.

85 **Figure 2 – A 27°C pulse inhibits the association of ELF3 to foci in root nuclei.** The localization of
 86 ELF3 at dusk in root nuclei of (A-B) *35S::YFP:ELF3 elf3-4* or (C-D) *35S::YFP:ELF3 elf3-4/elf4-1*.
 87 Images were taken at (A, C) 22°C or (B, D) after a two-hour 27°C pulse started at ZT6 (short-day 8/16
 88 photoperiods). (E) Number of foci per nuclei under the respective treatment. (F) Relative change in
 89 the number of ELF3 foci following a temperature pulse in the *elf3-4* or *elf3-4/elf4-1* background. Data
 90 was made relative to the respective genotype at 22°C. Images were collected on two occasions.
 91 Significance was determined by a T-test: n.s = no significance, *** = $p < 0.001$. Scale bars are 5 μ m.

93 **Supplementary Figure 1 – Elevated temperature reduces the nuclear accumulation of ELF3.**
 94 The relative nuclear signal of ELF3 in (A) hypocotyl or (B) root nuclei. Nuclear signal was quantified
 95 using the images collected for the foci counts of figure 1 and figure 2, respectively. The nuclear signal
 96 was made relative to the nuclear signal of ELF3 in the *elf3-4* background at 22°C for each respective
 97 tissue type. Images were collected on two separate occasions with a combined n of 12 or more images
 98 analyzed for each respective genotype and temperature treatment. Significance was calculated using a
 99 one-way ANOVA with a tukey-HSD post-hoc test. Different letters signify a significance of $p < 0.05$.

Figure 1

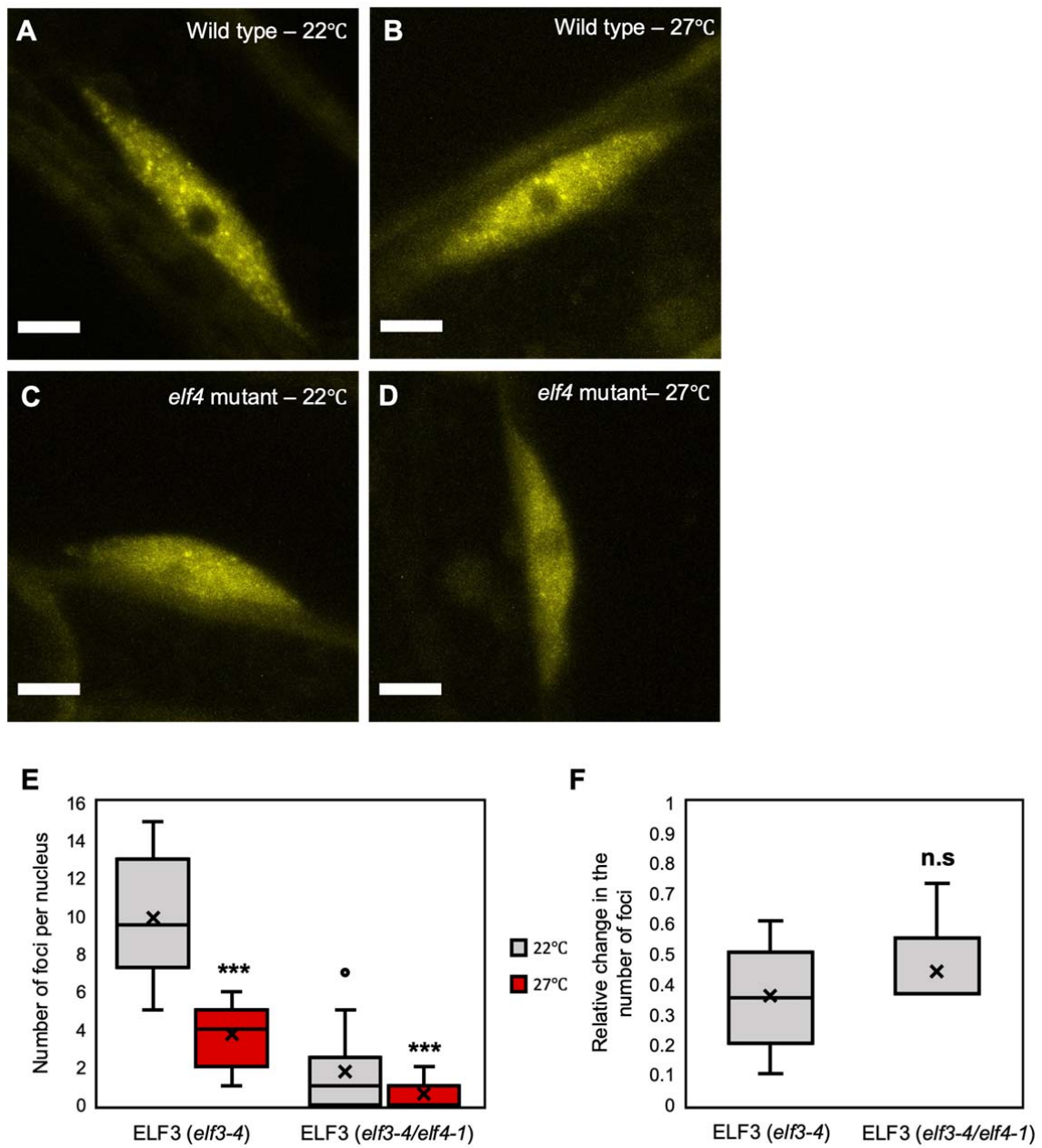
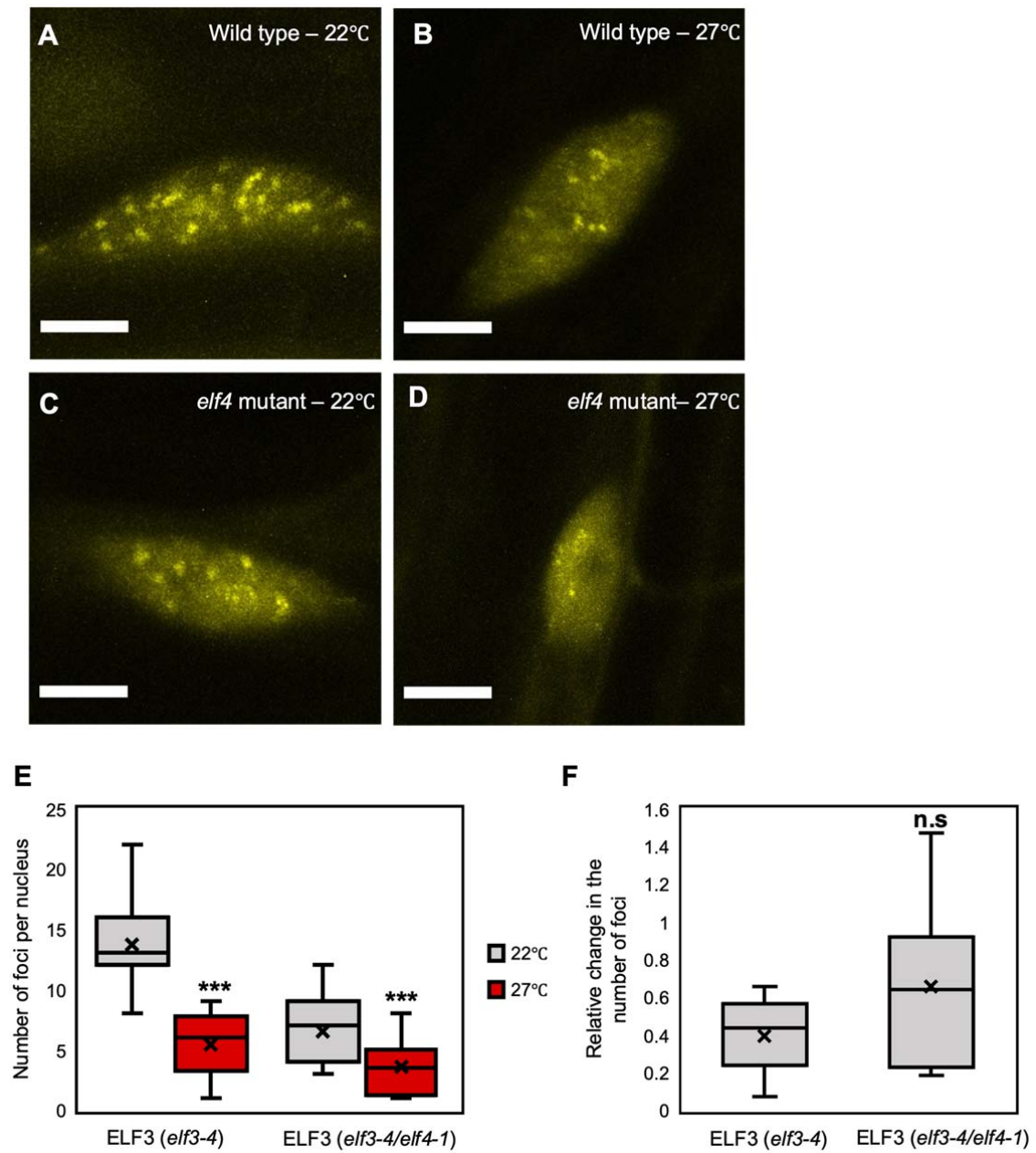
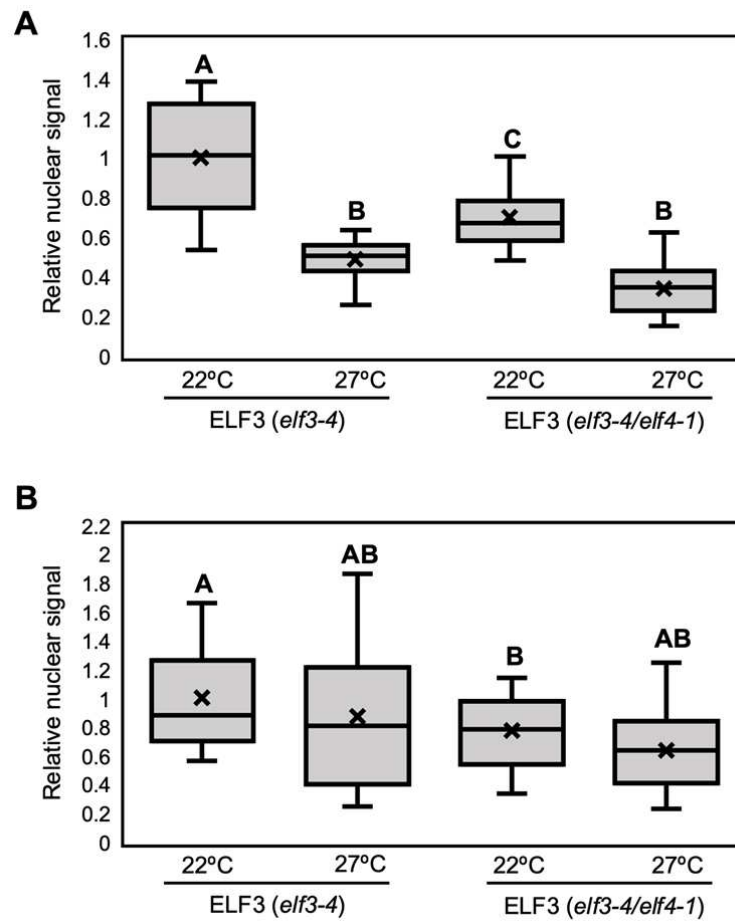


Figure 2



101 **Supplementary Figure 1**



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